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THE BLIND GIRL OF CASTÈL - CUILLÈ

POEM BY

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW

ILLUSTRATED TABLEAUX WITH MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

ARRANGED BY

MARGUERITE W. MORTON

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HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

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ARRANGED BY MARGUERITE W. MORTON.

The Reader should stand on a raised platform at one side of the principal stage

PART I.

At the foot of the mountain height
Where is perched Castèl Cuillè,
When the apple, the plum and the almond tree
In the plain below were growing white,
This is the song one might perceive
On a Wednesday morn of Saint Joseph's eve:

[*Sung behind scenes.*]

"*The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,*
So fair a bride shall leave her home!
Should blossom and bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass to-day!"

This old Te Deum, rustic rites attending,
Seemed from the clouds descending;
When lo! a merry company
Of rosy village girls, clean as the eye,
Came to the cliff, all singing the same strain;
Resembling there, so near unto the sky,
Rejoicing angels, that kind Heaven has sent
For their delight and our encouragement.

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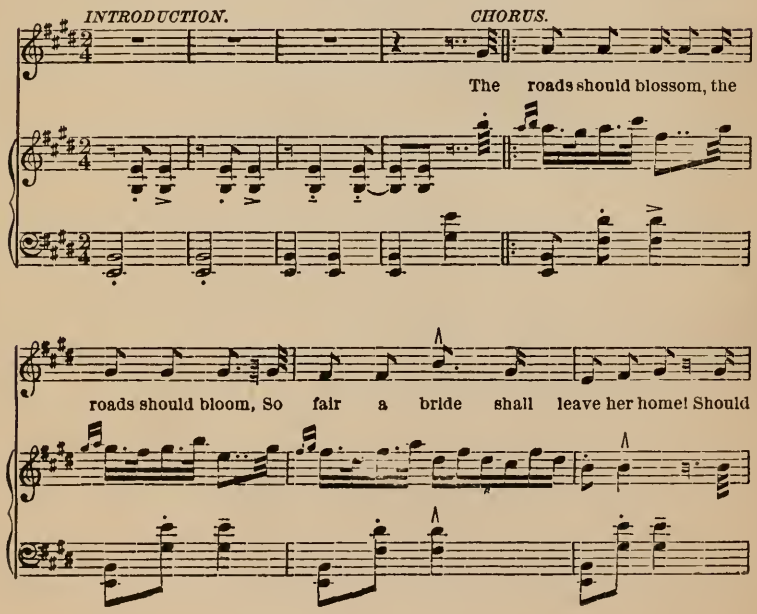
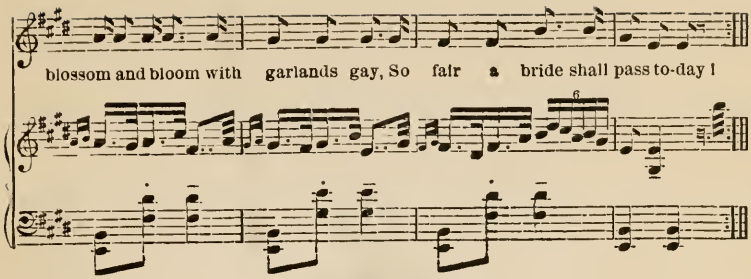
It is Baptiste and his affianced maiden,
With garlands for the bridal laden.
Together blending,
And soon descending
The narrow sweep
Of the hillside steep,
They wind aslant
Toward St. Amant,
Through leafy alleys
Of verdurous valleys,
With merry sallies
Singing their chant.

[*Curtain rises on Tableau I. Chorus sings.*]

[*Adapted from Grieg's "Norwegian Bridal Procession," by Lilian C. Morton.*]





[*Curtain falls.*]

The sky was blue; without one cloud of gloom,
The sun of March was shining brightly,
And to the air the freshening wind gave lightly
Its breathings of perfume.

Meanwhile, whence comes it that among
These youthful maidens fresh and fair,
So joyous, with such laughing air,
Baptiste stands sighing, with silent tongue?
And yet the bride is fair and young.

It is that half-way up the hill,
In yon cottage, by whose walls
Stand the cart-house and the stalls,
Dwelleth the blind orphan still,
Daughter of a veteran old;
And you must know, one year ago,
That Margaret, the young and tender,
Was the village pride and splendor,
And Baptiste her lover bold.
Love, the deceiver, them ensnared;
For them the altar was prepared;
But alas! the summer's blight,
The dread disease that none can stay,
The pestilence that walks by night,
Took the young bride's sight away.

All at the father's stern command was changed;
Their peace was gone, but not their love estranged.
Wearied at home, ere long the lover fled;
Returned but three short days ago,
The golden chain they round him throw,
He is enticed and onward led
To marry Angela, and yet
Is thinking ever of Margaret.

Then suddenly a maiden cried:
"Anna, Theresa, Mary, Kate!
Here comes the cripple Jane!"
A woman, bent and gray with years,
Now upon the scene appears,
And all toward her run, as fleet
As had they wings upon their feet.
It is that Jane, the cripple Jane,
Is a soothsayer, wary and kind.
But for this once the village seer
Wears a countenance severe,
And from beneath her eyebrows thin and white,
Her two eyes flash, like cannons bright,
Aimed at the bridegroom in waistcoat blue,
Who, like a statue, stands in view;
Changing color, as well he might,
When the beldame, wrinkled and gray,
Takes the young bride by the hand,
And, with the tip of her reedy wand
Making the sign of the cross, doth say:

[*Curtain rises on Tableau II.*]

[*Reader turns toward stage as she says:*]

"Thoughtless Angela, beware!
Lest when thou weddest this false bridegroom
Thou diggest for thyself a tomb!"

[*Curtain falls.*]

Saddened a moment, the bridal train
Resumed the dance and song again;
The bridegroom only was pale with fear.
And down green alleys
Of verdurous valleys,
With merry sallies,
They sang the refrain:

[*Sung behind scenes. Same music as in Tableau I.*]

"*The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,*
So fair a bride shall leave her home!
Should blossom and bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass to-day!"

PART II.

By suffering worn and weary,
But beautiful as some fair angel yet,
Thus lamented Margaret,
In her cottage lone and dreary:

"He has arrived! arrived at last!
Yet Jane has named him not these three days past;
Arrived! yet keeps aloof so far!
And knows that of my night he is the star!
Where is Baptiste? he hears not when I call!
A branch of ivy, dying on the ground,
I need some bough to twine around!
In pity come! Be to my suffering kind!
True love, they say, in grief doth more abound.
What then—when one is blind?

"Who knows? perhaps I am forsaken!
Ah! woe is me! then bear me to my grave!
Oh, God! what thoughts within me waken?
Away! he will return! I do but rave!
He will return! I need not fear!
He swore it by our Saviour dear;

He could not come at his own will;
Is weary, or perhaps is ill!
Perhaps his heart in this disguise
Prepares for me some sweet surprise!
But some one comes! Though blind, my heart can see!
And that deceives me not! 'Tis he! 'Tis he!"
And the door ajar is set,
And poor, confiding Margaret
Rises, with outstretched arms but sightless eyes.
'Tis only Paul, her brother, who thus cries:
"Angela, the bride, has passed!
I saw the wedding-guests go by;
Tell me, my sister, why were we not asked?
For all are there but you and I!
Perhaps they will come; for they do not wed
Till to-morrow at seven o'clock, it is said."

"Angela married! and not send
To tell her secret unto me?
O speak! who may the bridegroom be?"
"My sister, 'tis Baptiste, thy friend?"

A cry the blind girl gave, but nothing said;
A milky whiteness spreads upon her cheeks;
An icy hand, as heavy as lead,
Descending, as her brother speaks,
Upon her heart, that has ceased to beat,
Suspends awhile its life and heat.

[*Curtain rises on Tableau III.*]

[*Reader turns toward stage and says:*]

"Hark! the joyous airs are ringing!
Sister, dost thou hear them singing?"

[*Curtain falls.*]

Now rings the bell, nine times reverberating,
And the white daybreak, stealing up the sky,

Sees in two cottages two maidens waiting,
How differently!

Queen of a day, by flatterers caressed,
The one puts on her cross and crown,
Decks with a huge bouquet her breast,
And flaunting, fluttering up and down,
Looks at herself and cannot rest.

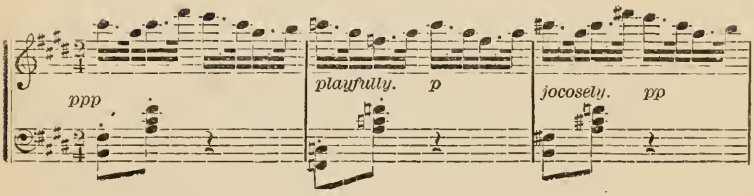
[*Curtain rises; then falls on Tableau IV. Music same as in Tableau I.*]

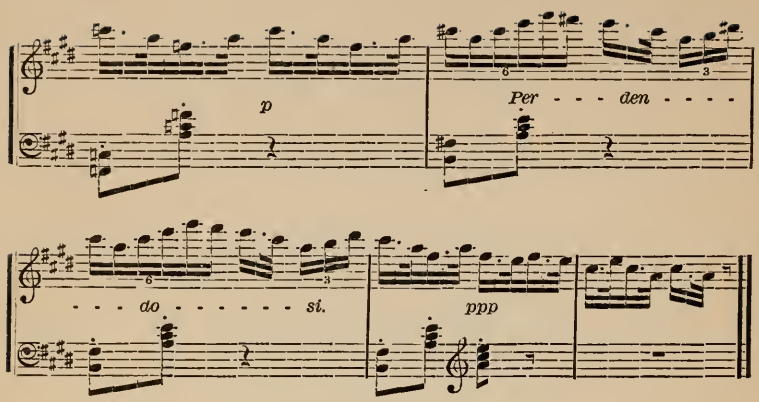
The other, blind, within her little room,
Has neither crown nor flower's perfume;
But in their stead for something gropes apart,
That in a drawer's recess doth lie,
And, 'neath her bodice of bright scarlet dye,
Convulsive clasps it to her heart.

The one, fantastic, light as air,
'Mid kisses ringing,
And joyous singing,
Forgets to say her morning prayer!

The other, with cold drops upon her brow,
Joins her two hands, and kneels upon the floor,
And whispers, as her brother opes the door,
"O God! forgive me now!"

[*Curtain rises on Tableau V.*]





[*Curtain falls.*]

Then the orphan, young and blind,
Conducted by her brother's hand,
Toward the church, by paths unscanned,
With tranquil air her way doth wind.
Near the castle, fair to see,
And proud of its name of high degree,
A little chapel, almost bare,
At the base of the rock is builded there;
All glorious that it lifts aloof,
Above each jealous cottage roof,
Its sacred summit, swept by autumn gales,
And its blackened steeple high in air,
Round which the osprey screams and sails.

"Paul, lay thy noisy rattle by!"
Thus Margaret said. "Where are we? we ascend!"
"Yes; seest thou not our journey's end?
Hearest not the osprey from the belfry cry?
The hideous bird, that brings ill luck, we know?
Dost thou remember when our father said,
The night we watched beside his bed,
'O daughter, I am weak and low,

Take care of Paul; I feel that I am dying!'
And thou and he and I all fell to crying?
Then on the roof the osprey screamed aloud;
And here they brought our father in his shroud.
There is his grave; there stands the cross we set;
Why dost thou clasp me so, dear Margaret?
Come in! The bride will be here soon;
Thou tremblest! O my God! thou art going to swoon!"

She could no more, the blind girl, weak and weary!
A voice seemed crying from that grave so dreary,
"*What would'st thou do, my daughter?*" and she started,
And quick recoiled, aghast, faint-hearted;
But Paul, impatient, urges evermore
Her steps toward the open door;
And when, beneath her feet, the unhappy maid
Crushes the laurel near the house immortal,
And with her head, as Paul talks on again,
Touches the crown of filigrane
Suspended from the low-arched portal,
No more restrained, no more afraid,
She walks as for a feast arrayed,
And in the ancient chapel's sombre night
They both are lost to sight.

At length the bell,
With booming sound,
Sends forth resounding round,
Its hymeneal peal o'er rock and down the dell.
It is broad day, with sunshine and with rain;
And yet the guests delay not long,
For soon arrives the bridal train,
And with it brings the village throng.

In sooth, deceit maketh no mortal gay,
For lo! Baptiste, on this triumphant day,
Mute as an idiot, sad as yester-morning,
Thinks only of the beldame's words of warning.

And Angela thinks of her cross, I wis;
To be a bride is all! The pretty lisper
Feels her heart swell to hear all round her whisper,
"How beautiful! how beautiful she is!"

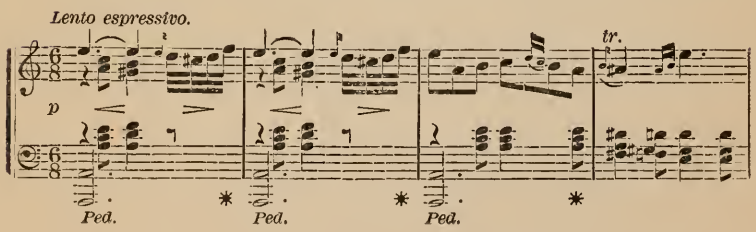
But she must calm that giddy head,
For already the mass is said;
At the holy table stands the priest;
The wedding-ring is blest; Baptiste receives it;
Ere on the finger of the bride he leaves it,
He must pronounce one word at least.
'Tis spoken; and sudden, at the groomsman's side,
"'Tis he!" a well-known voice has cried.
And while the wedding-guests all hold their breath,
"Baptiste," she says, "since thou hast wished my death,
As holy water be my blood for thee!"
And calmly in the air a knife suspended.

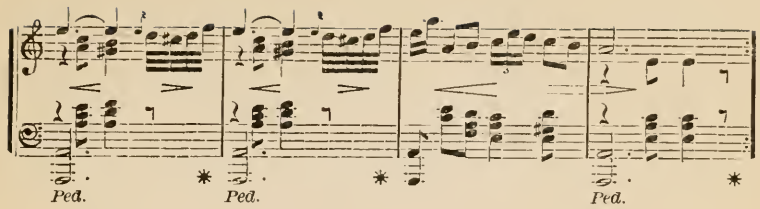
[*Curtain rises; then falls on Tableau VI.*]

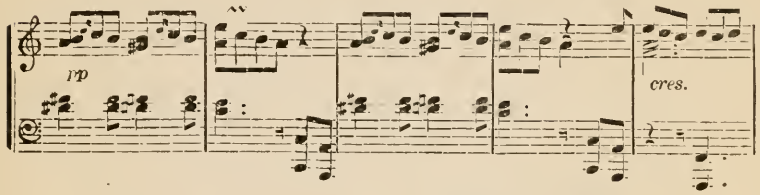
Doubtless her guardian angel near attended,
For anguish did its work so well,
That, ere the fatal stroke descended,
Lifeless she fell.

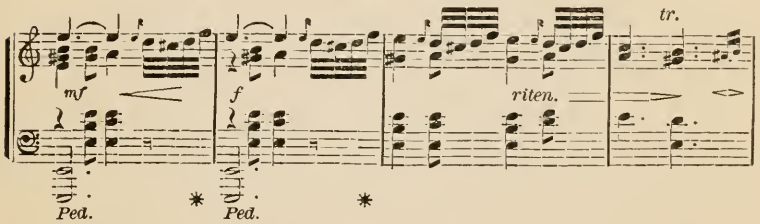
[*Curtain rises on Tableau VII.*]

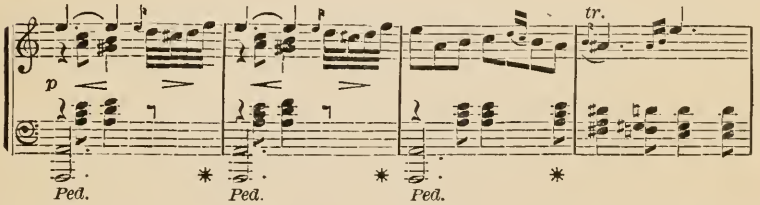
[*Adapted from Batiste's "Elevation," by Lilian C. Morton.*]

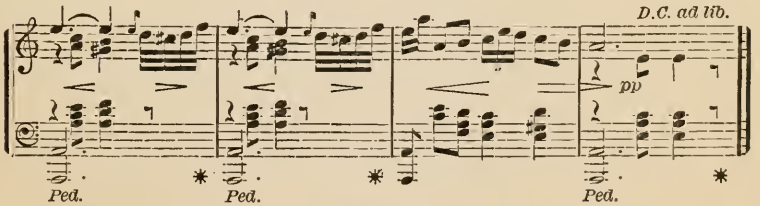












[*Curtain falls.*]

At eve, instead of bridal verse,
The De Profundis filled the air.
Decked with flowers a simple hearse
To the church-yard forth they bear;
Village girls in robes of snow
Follow, weeping as they go;
Nowhere was a smile that day,
No, ah, no! for each one seemed to say:

"The road should mourn and be veiled in gloom,
So fair a corpse shall leave its home;
Should mourn and should weep, ah, well-a-day!
So fair a corpse shall pass to-day!"

COSTUMES.

The ladies should wear peasant costumes—short, round skirt, full white waists, black or colored bodices, low shoes, and caps. Angela's dress should be white; the others may be of any preferred color. An effective costume for Margaret consists of black skirt and white waist with crimson bodice and cap.

The priest should wear a long robe. The other gentlemen should wear peasant costume, Baptiste's being a little gayer and richer than the others. Cripple Jane, a long, loose cloak of dull brown or gray, with pointed hood. Hair powdered and hanging about the face.

TABLEAU I.

Scene, a wood. Angela and Baptiste in centre. Baptiste turned partially away from Angela, gazing abstractedly into the distance. Angela, smiling and happy, in merry conversation with one of the maidens who form a circle around the betrothed pair. A few young men in peasant costume may be grouped back of the others and engage in light by-play with the dancers, not mingling with them in such a way as to obscure the figures of the dance.

The dance may be executed by 8, 12 or 16 young ladies, according to the amount of stage-room available. All should be provided with wreaths, which may be made of the wooden rings used in gymnastic exercises twined with smilax and flowers. One-half the number (every

other one as they stand in a circle) hold these wreaths in the right hand; the others, in the left. Partners stand facing each other, holding one wreath high between them with their right hands, while the left reaches down and back in opposition to right and holds the wreath which is held in the left hand of the person standing next in the circle. This makes a complete ring, right hands all being held high, left low, right foot crossed over left and resting on toes, face smiling and turned toward audience, whole expression lively and animated. This attitude should be maintained throughout the opening chords of the music, at the close of which the circle should be instantly broken, each retaining her own wreath, and those holding the wreath in left hand transferring it quickly to the right. Then all, holding wreaths gracefully above heads in right hands, sing chorus and dance, schottische step, as follows:

Turning to left, pass partner, eight counts.

Turn vis-à-vis with left hand, eight counts.

Returning, pass partner as before, eight counts.

Turn vis-à-vis, left hand and salute partner, eight counts.

All having now returned to place, the piano part is repeated, while the dancers, holding wreaths as before, dance around in the circle as in the grand right and left of the lancers, except that instead of touching right hands the wreaths are waved and the body swayed lightly in passing. Continue until all have returned to place, and end with salute. The amount of music required for this figure depends upon the number of dancers engaged. The passage given may be repeated as often as necessary. The third figure, which if gracefully executed is extremely pretty, may be given either in immediate connection with the preceding, or be reserved for an encore. Still holding wreath in right hand, extend both hands to partner. Take long, gliding steps sideways toward audience (two counts), at the same time raising the arm which is toward the audience until the wreath is above the head. The other arm should move in exact opposition throughout, the torso inclined slightly away from audience, head slightly forward, face toward audience. Bring the retired foot up to closed position with the advanced (two counts). Repeat, reversing the direction of the movements, the gliding step being taken away from instead of toward the audience (four counts). Now raise the arm that is toward the audience and pass the wreath over the heads, at the same time pivoting on both feet and turning the body so that partners now stand back to back. Each releasing her partner's wreath retains her own, and, holding it gracefully above her head, salutes

her new vis-à-vis (eight counts), who becomes her partner as the figure is repeated (sixteen counts). This brings partners facing each other again, and the figure may be repeated, if desired, ending with the dancers in the attitude of salutation, which should be retained as the curtain falls. In bowing, one in each couple should step back slightly toward the audience and the other slightly away from the audience. This prevents the awkwardness of possible collisions, and the effect of the swaying figures crossing each other is very pleasing.

These dances should be executed with life and movement, the joyous and congratulatory spirit of the occasion being manifest in everything. Baptiste, as if rousing himself from his abstraction, should move about returning smiles and bows of congratulation. Angela should have her hands full of flowers. Her artless vanity and her ingenuous pleasure in the notice she receives will suggest opportunities for effective and graceful by-play.

TABLEAU II.

Scene, the same. Angela in centre, Baptiste at her left, Cripple Jane at her right. The latter holds Angela's right hand in her left, and in her right a "reedy wand" upraised. She looks sternly toward Baptiste, who stands in embarrassment and surprise tinged with fear. Angela has drawn back, half afraid. The peasants are grouped around, those farthest from the central group eagerly striving to catch the words of "the village seer," those nearer leaning forward or peeping over the shoulders of others in startled curiosity. No music. The characters should remain upon the stage after the curtain falls until the second chorus has been sung.

TABLEAU III.

Scene, Margaret's home. Furniture very simple, an antique cabinet and two or three chairs being all that is required. Margaret standing with one hand pressed to her heart, face tense, listening with strained attention to the chorus in the distance. Paul holding her other hand as if calling her attention to the music, his face full of childish delight and excitement. The part of Paul should be taken by a child of about six years.

TABLEAU IV.

Scene, Angela's home. The cabinet used in the preceding scene may be set at back of stage and concealed by an ornamental screen which will form a pretty background for the figures in this tableau. It can thus be brought into position for the fifth tableau without loss of time. Very little change in the stage-setting is necessary, or, indeed, possible in the short time intervening between this scene and the next. A simple dressing-case will add to the effectiveness of this picture, but it is better to dispense with it than to keep the audience waiting too long and lessen the effect of the contrast between the two scenes.

Angela seated, centre, with small mirror in her hand, her face turned to left and smiling as if replying to some comment of two maidens, who stand with the bridal veil in their hands ready to adjust it. A third, standing at Angela's right and a little behind her, is holding a spray of flowers at Angela's throat and looking, as if for advice, toward two maidens in the foreground at her right, one of whom apparently approves the arrangement, while the other is suggesting some change.

TABLEAU V.

Scene, Margaret's home. Margaret kneeling by the cabinet, the drawer of which is open. Left hand resting on handle of dagger, which she is just concealing in her bodice. Right arm thrown across the edge of drawer, supporting bowed head. Attitude expressive of tragic despair. Paul entering at door, in holiday attire. If the music given for this tableau is played very softly, with light, crisp touch, it conveys an indescribable impression of mockery which is most appropriate to the scene.

TABLEAU VI.

Scene, the chapel. Altar at back, centre, draped with white and adorned with flowers and lighted candles. Priest, book in hand, in front of altar. Angela and Baptiste standing before him. Wedding-guests grouped around. Baptiste, holding Angela's left hand in his left, has been stopped in the moment of placing the wedding-ring upon her finger, and stands in horrified amazement looking at Margaret, who, with her left hand on Baptiste's right arm, holds a dagger in her upraised right. Little Paul clings in terror to her dress; the guests stand horror-struck,

all eyes fastened upon Margaret. Cripple Jane is trying to force her way through the guests to Margaret's side. Angela, distressed and frightened, clings to one of her attendant maidens. No music.

TABLEAU VII.

Scene, the same. Margaret lying upon the ground, her head supported by Cripple Jane. Baptiste has flung himself upon his knees beside her in an agony of repentant grief. The priest, crucifix in hand, kneels near her feet. Little Paul has hidden his face in the dress of one maiden, who tries to comfort him. Another has hidden her face on a companion's shoulder. Of two others who are standing together, one has leaned forward and the other drawn back in terror, so that the two figures cross each other. Faces and attitudes of all expressive of grief and awe.

THE MUSIC.

The music is adapted from Grieg's Norwegian Bridal Procession and an Elevation by Batiste. The piano should be behind the scenes at the side of the stage. The chorus is sung three times: On the stage during the first tableau, behind the curtain after the second tableau, and in the distance behind the scenes during the third tableau. The piano part with which the chorus is sung is to be repeated as often as necessary for the dances in the first tableau. Count four to each measure in teaching the steps. The same music is to be played as an accompaniment to the fourth tableau. The second and sixth tableaux are to be given without musical accompaniment. The music for the seventh tableau should begin with the rising of the curtain and continue throughout the reading of the closing lines. The reader, having finished, should stand quietly until the last chords die softly away.

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